

# JOURNAL AT PETAWAWA

Men Plot  
To Escape

AMONG

Guards Will  
Shoot to Kill

## WAR CAMP PRISONERS

Fascinating Story of Visit to the Military Guard and the Germans, Turks and Austrians—The Stern Challenge of the Sentry and the Cry of "All's Well" Through Black Darkness of the Night.

Written specially for The Ottawa Evening Journal by one of its staff representative after thorough inspection during which much time was spent among the Germans, Austrian and Turkish prisoners of war.

Petawawa Military Internment Camp, March 9.—Within 100 miles of Ottawa is one of the biggest novelties that Canada has ever had inside its borders. It is Petawawa camp. Not the camp of the summer months where soldiers gather for training, but a war camp where are gathered over 600 real prisoners of war.

To the Canadian visiting the spot it is one continued kaleidoscope of novelties changing in quick succession.

The walk from the station in the direction of the camp along the unlit road for almost two miles is without excitement until suddenly from out of the darkness, with sharpness that sends a shiver right down one's back comes the command:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"F-F-Friend," one manages to stutter out.

"Advance friend, and give the countersign."

And one walks at the glittering point of a bayonet held firmly and with decision by a great coated guard.

It feels like real warfare.

"Letters from the General? Follow me," commands the guard.

### WONDERING IF THE RIFLE IS LOADED.

And as the guard leads the way to the guard-house for an examination of credentials you look at that wicked Ross rifle and wonder if it really is loaded. It is.

It is in the guard-house that one gets his first glimpse of military life. The long line of guards sleeping between watches with their rifles piled down the centre of the room, ready to jump to their feet should emergency demand, is surely impressive.

It is surely a welcome relief when at six o'clock reveille announces that life for the day is about to start. Behind an escort the visitor is led to the officers' quarters, where the officer commanding the guard, Captain Edwards, of the 42nd Lanark regiment, holds out a welcome hand. The routine of the day is just starting, and an invitation from the officer of the day to make the rounds of the camp with him, comes just at the right time.



### LARGEST PRISONERS' CAMP.

This is the largest prisoners' camp in Canada, the officer will proudly tell you, as he leads the way across the flat drill ground. The men are divided into five camps. The largest majority of the men here are Austrians and

MAJOR S. E. de la RONDE  
Camp commander at Petawawa military internment camp.

Turks, all army reservists of their respective countries. Some of them are officers. They have been brought from practically every town and city in Canada, although the majority hail from Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto.

"They are a hard bunch to take care of. We are so careful that they receive humane treatment and are not bullied by the guards that the men are beginning to get wise and take advantage of our kindness. They may do almost anything they like but escape," said the captain. "They are all getting fat at the treatment they receive here, their food allowance is even more than that of our own soldiers, and it is cooked equally well."

### THEY ARE WELL LOOKED AFTER.

The prisoners have been all supplied with warm clothing, sheepskin coats, rubber boots and warm mitts and caps. Each man is given four woollen blankets, a pillow and mattress and the camps are warm and well ventilated. They work if they want to, and if they work they are paid the same as our own soldiers.

"The layout of the camp could not be improved upon," continued the officer, "although it takes the largest guard ever mounted in the British Empire to watch the men, they are so scattered. Each evening at six o'clock the guard of 52 men goes on duty. Everything for the health of the men is watched, and the high sloping, sandy ground overlooking the Ottawa is one of the healthiest spots in Canada. There has not been a single case of serious illness since the camp was formed."

### FIRST PEEP AT THE PRISONERS.

At that moment we arrived at the first camp. A sentry was pacing up and down in front of the building, a long affair with a door at each end. Another sentry stood inside each door, all had fixed bayonets. The prisoners were just receiving their clothes, which had been locked up for the night, when the officer of the day arrived. Some of the men welcomed him with a smile and a salute, others scowled the darkest and muttered something in a foreign language which the officer could not understand. Down either side of the room is a line of bunks, double width and in three tiers.

When we arrived at the second camp the men were carrying their blankets out to be aired, laying them on the snow until they returned from breakfast.

In the distance can be heard the call for breakfast. The prisoners are quickly lined up inside the camp, and a few minutes later the escort of six armed men arrive and march them off to one of the two dining-rooms, where special paid prisoners hand them out their food as they sit at the long tables. It was porridge and bacon, with six ounces of bread that the men sat down to, with a big mug of tea, and they certainly bore out the officer's contention that they were getting fat on their diet.

### WOOD CUTTERS START OUT.

Immediately after breakfast the various fatigue parties and the men that had chosen to work cutting wood set out for their duties under escort. In little gangs of from six to ten, followed by their guard, they trudged across the snow and into the woods. The rest of the men returned to their camps and, after making their beds, started to play cards, read the religious books that had passed the censors, or worked at some handiwork such as making picture frames, which they sell as souvenirs of the camp, or wooden toys. Everything except dangerous knives and weapons has been left with them and in each camp is a canteen at which they may buy little delicacies and tobacco.

Only one thought can possibly pass through the mind of a visitor as he sees the prisoners. It is the hope that our boys who are taken prisoners will receive the same treatment at the hands of the Germans. It is the guard of soldiers who are to be more pitied than the prisoners.

The 160 men and six officers under the supervision of the camp commandant, Major de la Ronde, are on active service, under military law and discipline. They must work hard, be ever on the alert for plans of escape which are being unearthed all the time. If they fall asleep on sentry duty not only are they subject to a death sentence, but also they run the chance of having one of the prisoners run his own bayonet through him when making a dash for liberty.

"It is awfully aggravating to have to stand here and listen to these prisoners swearing at me and making fun of me in their own language," said one of the guards, who can understand Austrian. "Some of them think this ain't real war and we 'amateur militia' can't shoot, and they make fun of us. But just you wait. They say they are going to make a break for liberty in the spring when there is a chance of getting away. Then you will see that the guard can shoot, and shoot straight, and believe me I would give five dollars to be the man on sentry duty when they make their boasted break."